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ABSTRACT

Changes in society and the economy require significant changes in American educational institutions. A seven-point agenda for fostering lifetime learning includes (1) helping every child begin school healthy and ready to learn; (2) setting and achieving world-class standards in public education; (3) opening the doors of college opportunity to every young American eager and able to do college work; (4) expanding opportunities for youth to serve their communities and their country while earning money for their education through national service; (5) providing new learning opportunities for young people who are going from high school to work; (6) changing our unemployment system into a reemployment system; and (7) challenging every sector of society to accept greater responsibility for achieving an environment of lifelong learning. All advanced nations are facing a crisis of jobs and income and need to develop means to continue to create new jobs and increase income. In the United States data indicate that education, for those to obtain it, can go a long way to solving this problem. In order for the lifelong learning vision to work, a new ethic of education must grip the American imagination and the country must support various administration initiatives including Goals 2000 legislation, the Safe and Drug Free Schools Initiative, the new direct lending student loan program, the strengthened Pell grant program, and the Americorps National Health Service Program. (JB)

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release February 22, 1994

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION

Washington Hilton
Washington, D.C.

11:33 A.M. EST

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THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Father Malloy, for that introduction. Now that we're in Washington, D.C., I should say that the most important thing about him is not that he is the President of Notre Dame, but that he was a legendary high school basketball player who played on the same team with the great John Thompson, here in Washington, D.C.

Now, some people -- this is one of our big struggles in life. Some people would question is it better to be the President of Notre Dame or be a great high school basketball player. (Laughter.) The answer is, it's better to do both, if possible. (Laughter.)

I'd like to thank you all for inviting me here and to say that I've looked forward to this day. I want to recognize many of you in the audience, but I think if I start I don't know where I'll stop. I am glad to be joined here by the Secretary of Education, and I know that the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the Secretary of Labor also are on this program.

Many leaders in our administration have come from the ranks of higher education -- Donna Shalala was the Chancellor at the University of Wisconsin. The Director of USIA, Joseph Duffy, who came in with me was the President of American University and formerly the President of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Dr. David Satcher, the Director of the Center of Disease Control, was formerly the President of Maharry Medical Center in Tennessee. Shirley Chater, the Commissioner of Social Security, was the President of Texas Women's University.

Then there are the people in our administration like the Secretary of Labor Bob Reich, the First Lady and me, who taught at institutions of higher education and complained about you all the time. (Laughter.) So we're actually all exhausted after the last year and we're looking for a home to go back to -- (laughter) -- so I sort of came here for a job interview today. (Laughter and applause.)

For 75 years, the American Council on Education has represented colleges and universities with real distinction. And in large measure, because of your common efforts, it is now generally agreed that we have the finest system of higher education anywhere in the world. No other nation gives such a high percentage of its high school graduates the opportunity to go on to college. None other offers such diverse choices among institutions. No other nations conducts as much basic research at its universities or produces as many Nobel laureates. No wonder tens of thousands of students come here from all over the world every year to study.

The shape of American higher education is changing, and with it, the needs and demands. This morning, in preparation for this speech in part, I went jogging with about 12 students from the

Northern Virginia Community College. One had just become a citizen, was a native of Iran; another was a native of Sierra Leone; another was a native of Peru; another a native of Scotland. Nobody but me had a southern accent in the whole crowd. (Laughter.)

Every great chapter in our history has begun by expanding educational opportunities -- from guaranteeing free public education to creating the land grant colleges, to enacting the G.I. Bill. Education has propelled our economy, strengthened our democracy and created our great American middle class.

As Governor, I worked to improve our schools because I thought it was the best way to lift people up in a state with a lot of people who worked hard, but were not rewarded sufficiently for their work. I ran for President in large measure because I thought too many of our people were working too hard for too little, that the American Dream of upward mobility was seriously imperiled and that our country was coming apart when it needed to come together. As President, I work every day to try to secure and expand opportunities for people to be in that middle class and to see that American Dream.

It is now clear that in order to do that, more than ever before, Americans must seek their own opportunities to improve their lives through education and training and that it must happen over the course of a lifetime. We now know that the average American, because of changes in the economy at home and abroad, will change work seven or eight times in a lifetime, even if that person stays with the same employer. Although most will change employers frequently throughout a lifetime. If that is true, it is clear that we need an agenda as a people for lifetime learning.

And so today, I want to offer you a seven-point agenda for lifetime learning. First, to help every child begin school healthy and ready to learn. Second, to set and achieve world-class standards in public education. Third, to open the doors of college opportunity to every young American who is eager and able to do college work. Fourth, to expand opportunities for our young people to serve their communities and their country while earning money for their education. Fifth, to provide new learning opportunities for young people who are going from high schools to work. Sixth, to change our unemployment system into a reemployment system. And finally, to challenge every sector of our society to accept greater responsibility for achieving an environment of lifelong learning.

I come today to ask for your support, to invite the Congress to continue its cooperation in enacting the lifelong learning agenda, and to call on all Americans to do their part.

Throughout our history, people have had the idea that if they worked hard, played by the rules and made the most of their opportunities, they would be rewarded by a decent life and greater opportunities for their children. But for the last two decades, that whole idea has been called into question as more and more Americans have lengthened their work week while their wages have remained stagnant or have actually declined relative to inflation.

This happened because of a lot of things. The world is changing rapidly, more rapidly than our polices; perhaps more rapidly than our ability to understand the changes themselves. An economy that was once almost entirely domestic is now global in its competition for markets and for jobs. Once capital and information, management and technologies were limited by national boundaries. Clearly, today, they are not. Once the principal source of wealth was natural resources. Then it was mass production. Today it is clearly the problem-solving capacity of the human mind -- making products and tailoring services to the needs of people all across the globe.

In the 19th century, at most, young Americans needed a high school education to make their way. It was good enough if they could read well and understand basic numbers. In the 20th century, as the century progressed, more and more they needed more education, college as well. And in the 21st century, our people will have to keep learning all their lives.

This is clearly evident everywhere. Next month in Detroit, I will host a conference of the world's leading industrial nations to discuss how we can make technology, information, trade and education create more and better jobs for all our citizens. This, now, is a problem throughout all advanced countries, the problem we have been experiencing for 20 years. In America, we have had more good fortune than the Europeans, for example, in creating new jobs. Our problem has been increasing incomes. In Europe, hardly any new jobs have been created. Now in Japan they're having great difficulty creating new jobs. So, you see, in all the advanced countries there is a combined crisis of jobs and incomes.

In the United States, even though we created almost two million jobs last year, we are still millions short of where we would be, going back to 1989, if this had been a normal economic recovery. So you now have a global crisis in the advanced nations: How do you create jobs, how do you raise incomes?

If you look at the charts behind me, you will see, however, that even though this is an international problem for all the advanced countries, it is clear that for individuals in our country, education goes a long way toward solving the problem of jobs and incomes.

First, if you look at the unemployment rate, in America in March of 1993, these numbers would be all slightly lower now, but still more or less the same. The ratios would all be the same. People with no high school diploma had a 12.6 percent unemployment rate. People with four years of high school had a 7.2 percent unemployment rate. People with some college education had a 5.7 percent unemployment rate -- that is, below the national average. People with four years of college had a 3.5 percent unemployment rate, way below the national average. And I would point out that this is -- this is after several years of severe defense downsizing which has dramatically increased unemployment among college-educated workers in some sectors of the economy. And these numbers still hold.

Now, if you look at the chart to my right -- and now I'm on your right, too -- I've turned around -- (laughter) -- if you see the earnings here, it is clear that what you earn depends upon what you're able to learn.

Again, the mean earnings of full-time workers -- this is calendar year 1992 -- $19,100 for people with no high school diploma; $5,000 more for four years of high school; $4,000 more for some college; $11,000 more for four years of college. Stepping up.

It is, therefore, clear that if we really want America to grow jobs and increase earnings, we will have to dramatically improve the levels of education of the American people -- that we have to start with the pre-schoolers, but we can't stop with the adults.

Today, these dozen young people that I ran with, I asked them what their ages were. The youngest was 19, the oldest was 32 in this community college. I would say their average age -- I didn't run the math -- but their average age was probably, oh, 24, 25. The average age of a college student in America today is I think is 26. And it is likely, given the demographics and the fact that the

youngest of the baby boomers are now 29 if my math is right -- that the average age will continue to go up for another 10 years or so.

So any hope we have to hook the American economy to the 21st century and to open up opportunity again depends upon making sure that our education system is responsive to and adequate to the demands of the times, and able, I might add, to make a strength of that diversity that I spoke about a few moments ago.

In 1993, we tried to clear some of the noneducational obstacles -- by bringing the deficit down, creating incentives to invest in a growing economy, stripping away controls on exports that were outmoded so that we could export more of our high technology products. Opening up trade opportunities in Mexico and throughout the world with the GATT agreement and other initiatives, trying to build a foundation for economic growth.

Last year, our economy created almost two million jobs, 90 percent of them in the private sector -- a real change from previous years when more and more job growth had come only from government. And we have begun clearly to move in the right direction. But over the long run, if you look at these charts behind me, it is clear that the future of our economy and, therefore, the fabric of our society, is in no small measure in your hands and the hands of others who are committed to educating our people for a lifetime.

We're going to have to make some tough choices because we can't do everything we would like to do. But I believe we can, with discipline, continue to bring the deficit down and make room for investments that improve the skills and the productivity of the American people. In order to do that, we have to take the long view, and we have to avoid gimmicks. I believe -- and I think I have some credibility in saying this now since I lived in a state and governed a state for a dozen years with, I think, the toughest budget mechanism in the country, and since we now have adopted one tough budget, bringing the deficit down and if this budget is adopted, our administration will be the first since Harry Truman's to have three consecutive declines in the deficit -- I think I can say that I think this balanced budget amendment is not a good idea for the United States. And I'll tell you why. (Applause.)

First of all, if you constitutionalize the budgeting process, and no one's sure what it all means, you're going to wind up having courts making decisions about budgets. If any of you have ever had your budgets in court, you know that's not a very good place to do it. (Laughter.)

Secondly, if the amendment is carried out, it will lead to, in the near term, until we reform health care, it will lead in the near term either to huge tax increases which could cramp economic growth, or to huge cuts in defense or Social Security and Medicare, or investments in education and technology, or all of the above. And if it is decided to ignore that, then what you will do is basically put the filibuster in the Senate and in the House in the only area where it doesn't exist today -- the budget. That is, you will put 40 percent of the Senate and 40 percent of the House plus one vote in total control of the American government and America's future. Now, that's what this does if it passes the way it is.

The budget that I presented cuts or eliminates outright over 300 government programs, and reduces the deficit according to very tough targets, and increases our investment at the national level in lifelong learning by 23 percent by getting rid of some things and investing in others. (Applause.)

If you think that's the way we ought to go, I wouldn't mind it, since you're in town, if it's not even a long distance call

if you call your senator or congressman and tell them that that's the way you feel. (Applause.)

Why do we need to spend this money? Let's look at the various elements that I outlined earlier. First, in life long learning. With regard to early childhood, we all know that parents are the first and most important teachers, but sometimes government can help them to do that. That's why our agenda begins with investing in our youngest children, giving them a healthy start in life; giving them a chance to succeed later as students and ultimately as citizens; giving them a chance to stay out of prison and in the work force and become full-fledged human beings in every way. That's why we're increasing our investment in child nutrition and immunization, and investing not just in a bigger Head Start program, but in a better one as well. Our budget will serve about 850,000 children this year and provide new opportunities for the very youngest children.

With regard to public schools, I want to talk a little about our Goals 2000 legislation that the Secretary of Education has worked so hard on. Back in 1989, I represented the governors in negotiating the national education goals with the administration. The goals were designed to recognize the fact that from the day they start kindergarten to the day they graduate from high school, we owe our young people the best education in the world, and then the chance to go to a lifetime of learning.

Our states and communities have always taken the lead in public education and they will continue to do so. But the national government can do more to help. With the Goals 2000 legislation, we enshrine the national education goals, establish national standards by which we can determine whether schools are meeting those goals, encourage grass-roots reforms and give the schools the flexibility and the tools they need to meet the goals. We encourage states and communities to learn from one another, empower individual school districts to experiment with ideas like public school choice and charter schools, asking always one overriding question of every education official: Are the children learning what they need to learn to compete and win in the global economy?

Goals 2000 has been approved by bipartisan majorities in both Houses of Congress. I look forward to a speedy conference and to signing the bill into law next month.

We also favor dramatic reforms in the education and secondary education act. Our efforts to raise standards and to focus resources have sparked some controversy, so I thought I would mention this, even though it only indirectly affects you. I just think the status quo in this act is not good enough. As the House debates this act this week, we will fight for fundamental changes: First of all, high standards of all students, wherever they are. Secondly, significant waiver authority for schools to make experimental decisions.

We've got real problems in this country today, folks. Baltimore, for example has, in effect, chartered several of their schools -- I think up to nine now -- to be operated by private corporations to see if they can at least fix the physical facilities. If you want to know why -- I don't know how many of you saw -- here, I'll promote Al Gore a little bit here -- (laughter) -- The Sunday Times Magazine has a wonderful article on the Vice President. It also has a stunning picture essay which says this better than I could -- "America's Best Building." See, this is a beautiful library and this is a lousy building. This is a school building, this is a prison library. Why? Because you can take a state into federal court and make them build buildings like this for prisoners. And the students don't have any such constitutional claims now.

So these school districts are having to try some fairly radical approaches and they're trying to say, well, if we've got some fat in this budget, if we can clean up the physical facilities, if we can make it available, we ought to try some things. We want to give people a chance to try that.

I made a joke about Father Malloy's basketball prowess, but you know, I think it's important for children when they're in school to be able to play basketball and baseball and have music and learn something about art. And a lot of schools in this country where the kids need it the worst, can't afford it anymore. You know, there are kids in neighborhoods that produce the greatest baseball players in the history of American where there are no gloves and balls and bats and playgrounds anymore. It's a serious problem.

And I don't want -- I could spend the rest of the time talking about that picture essay, but you ought to get that picture and ask yourself, How did my country come to this? Why, when it's so much cheaper to educate somebody than it is to keep them in prison, can you get a better library in the prison than you can in the school? (Applause.)

Which leads me to the next point -- the other thing we try to do in this is to make sure that the limited money we do have goes to the school districts that need it the most. Why? Because they don't have access to the federal courts to order people to build them those kind of buildings. So we have to spend the money that we have where it is needed the most.

And finally, we try to promote more parental involvement in the schools, knowing it will make a difference. If it makes a difference in Head Start, it will make a difference in elementary school, too.

We have a safe and drug-free schools initiative. First of all, we know that more than 160,000 kids every day stay home because they are afraid to go to school. Tens of thousands go to school carrying not just their lunches, but knives or guns. In that kind of environment, it's hard for teachers to teach and for students to learn -- when people are scared and people are armed. Our safe schools act helps to reduce violence by adding security, removing weapons, and maybe most importantly, helping schools to get the resources to teach young people to resolve their problems peacefully. And our National Drug Strategy provides more education to help them stay away from drugs and guns and gangs.

Let me just mention one thing. I know you're going to think I'm obsessed with this, but I heard about a program the other day in a school that is immensely successful: Teaching children ways other than violence to resolve their difficulties. It was wildly popular among the students. There was a drop in violence in the school in question. A business had given this school $3,000 to pay for somebody to come in and teach the program, but because it was dependent upon largesse, the grant wasn't forthcoming the next year and so the $3,000 was gone. If $3,000 kept one person out of the penitentiary, it saved $30,000 a year. We have got to get our priorities back in order on this investment issue.

The next thing I want to talk about with regard to education is student loans -- something you know a lot about. Last June, I addressed a commencement at Northeastern University in Boston and I met the young student who spoke there named Doug Luffborough, who delivered an incredibly moving address. He talked about how his mother had worked hard at very low wages all her life and he tried to tell her that he wanted to give up college so he could help her support his two younger brothers and their sister. But his mother insisted that he go on to college no matter how difficult her

circumstances. His message was, never say I could have, I should have, I would have; just say, I can, I will.

Well, that's great that he did that. But you and I know that there are too many young people who go to college and drop out or defer going to college because they think they can't afford it. And last year I proposed and the Congress adopted initiatives to change the student loan program to help people like Doug Luffborough and I thank all of you for helping it pass.

The new direct lending program reduces fees, interest rates and monthly payments for millions of borrowers. It gives every student the choice of repaying loans as a small percentage of income over time which is a big deal for young people who know they want to do things that are personally rewarding but don't pay very much. It will decrease the debt burden that crushes too many of those people and discourages them from spending a few years in lower-paying jobs. And it will save the taxpayers over $4 billion in just the first five years.

We have also strengthened the Pell Grant program. When I became President, the Pell Grant program was $2 billion in arrears. That's one of those pleasant things you don't know about until you show up one day and they drop that on your desk. (Laughter.) I am pleased to report that if Congress accepts the proposal that the Secretary of Education has developed, the shortfall will be eliminated by the end of the next fiscal year, the number of student recipients will increase to 4.1 million -- the most ever -- average awards will increase and, for the first time in four years, the maximum benefit will increase. (Applause.)

Congress has also given us the tools to root out fraud and to decrease default, and we're beginning to use them. We want to listen attentively to your suggestions for reducing federal intrusion and red tape. But we have to faithfully implement and vigorously enforce this law. That was the compact I made with students all over America in 1992: If I became president, I would try to open the doors of education to all young Americans, never make the cost a deterrent, but you've got to pay your loan back.

We also need to do more to open the doors of equal opportunity. Last fall, I signed an executive order strengthening the partnership between the federal government and historically black colleges and universities. Last week, the Department of Education issued guidelines that lifted the cloud hanging over scholarships for minorities. (Applause.)

You know, it's interesting to me, the more people know about this issue, the more likely they are to be on our side. Did you notice that?

Later today, I will sign another executive order to advance educational excellence for Hispanic Americans. (Applause.) I believe we now live in a nation with way over 150 ethnic and racial groups. In a global economy with shrinking distances, instantaneous communication and blurred borders, this can give us an advantage in the 21st century unlike that enjoyed by any other nation. But only if we have a genuinely deep commitment to universal education and the development of the capacities of all Americans.

Now, let me say one word about my favorite project, national service. Last year we provided new opportunities for tens of thousands of our young people who wanted to contribute something to their communities and earn money for education. The National Service Program which Congress adopted, AmeriCorps, will this year send 20,000 young people out across our country, helping police to stop crime and violence, tutoring the young, keeping company with the old, helping the illiterate to learn to read, organizing neighborhood

cleanups, conserving national parks. Within three years, we'll have 100,000 young people a year doing that.

There was a program in Texas last summer where the young people helped to immunize over 100,000 people, and a respected evaluator just looked at the program and said that for every one dollar in tax money spent in that program of immunization, $5.50 in tax money would be saved with a healthier population.

National service is more than a program, it carries the spirit of what America is going to have to be like if we're going to solve our problems and grow closer as a people.

I want to thank the colleges and universities that are participating. Smith College makes community service a requirement for graduation. Spellman is forming real partnerships with communities throughout the Atlanta area. Hampshire College matches assistance with the National Service Program provides for young people who join AmeriCorps. For every American who needs to find a first job, national service is a good place to begin.

Let me also now talk very briefly about this School-to-Work issue, something that the community colleges have been particularly involved in. We have the best system of higher education in the world, but we are the only advanced country that basically has no system for helping all of our young people who don't go to the four-year colleges at least have a smooth transition from school to work where they've got a chance to have a good job with a growing income.

For the half of the young people who don't go to college and the nearly three-quarters who don't get a four-year college degree, we propose a better system to move from school to work -- a new kind of education and training connecting the classroom and the workplace, removing the artificial distinction between the academic and the practical. Students will learn practical problem-solving in the classroom and at job sites. And for at least a year after graduating, we want young people to get more training in workplaces and community colleges.

We have to have rigorous academics and practical learning. We have to tie the workplace to the learning environment in high school for young people who know their are not going on to four-year colleges in a way that makes them respect learning and gives them the option, therefore, to go on to a four-year college later, and to work and succeed if they do not.

We know now, from a lot of studies that have been done of people's personal learning capacities that a lot of very bright people actually learn more in a practical setting than in a more abstract setting. We also know that a lot of practical tasks now require very sophisticated levels of knowledge. Therefore, we have an opportunity to do something that Americans have resisted for too long, which is to merge instead of keep divided our notion of vocational education and academic education. And that is what the school-to-work program is all about. (Applause.)

Part of Goals 2000 is voluntary national skills standards that will enable every young person who goes through this program to get a nationally-recognized credential -- good for young men and women, good for employers who need skilled workers but don't always know how to recognize it. A B.A. degree should not and must not be the only ticket to a good job and a good livelihood, but you shouldn't be foreclosed from going on to get one by what you do in the school-to-work program. Our approach would solve both problems.

Finally, let me say, just as we need to train our young people, we have to retrain millions of workers who are losing their

jobs -- people who have been displaced by technological change, international trade, corporate restructuring, reduced defense spending and ordinary cycles in the business economy aggravated by changes in the global economy.

The unemployment system into which employers all over America pay taxes was designed for a time when there would be cyclical changes in the economy which would require them to lay their workers off so that humanity demanded that they give their workers some, even though a reduced level, of compensation. And then they would be brought back to work when the economy cycled upward again. The truth is that that doesn't describe what happens to most unemployed people anymore. And yet, the structure of unemployment is still designed for that economy.

What we need to do is sort of erase the whole concept of unemployment and develop one of reemployment. What would that mean? It would mean that at least on the day that someone loses a job, and before if they have any advance notice, people would be planning to use the unemployment time as a retraining time -- not just waiting around until the unemployment benefits run out to have to look around for a new job or a new skill, but to use the time on unemployment to learn and to grow and to develop new job skills and new awareness of what kinds of jobs are offered.

We want to create one-stop job centers where unemployed workers can get counseling and assistance and learn about new job opportunities, the skills they require and where they can best get the training.

Last month, just to give you one example, I attended a Labor Department conference on training and retraining, and I met some interesting people. I met a woman named Deb Woodbury from Bangor, Maine, who lost a factory job, had a bunch of kids, didn't know what in the world to do, learned new skills to be a marketing representative. I met a woman named Cynthia Scott from San Antonio, who went from welfare to a training program in nursing and a good job in a hospital. I met a man named John Hahn from Niagara County, New York, who was laid off for a job he had for 28 years because of defense cuts and, being an older worker, was still given the opportunity to learn new skills for a new career as a biomedical technician.

And I might say, he was lucky enough to find an employer who was smart enough not to discriminate against people because they weren't young; which has got to be a big part of this. We're going to move people through a mobile learning environment, we have to get over the notion that since you're not going to keep somebody for 30 years anyway -- or at least not in job X for 30 years -- people are going to have to be willing to hire people who are not young as well as people who are young. (Applause.)

We really do have -- ironically, we've got two big blocks here in the labor mobility. One is a lot of young people can't get hired coming out of college because they haven't had any experience, and so they keep running around like a dog chasing their tail -- how do you ever get it if nobody hires you? The other is people who have worlds of experience, but because they're so old, people say well, they don't want to hire them. Well, they look younger to me every day. (Laughter.)

So I think that these are -- employer attitudes are some things we're also going to have to work on. But if we can set up this kind of system, this reemployment system, it will become normal. Then losing a job may not be so traumatic because with income supports and retraining, people will be able to see it as an opportunity to move to a new and exciting and different career. So that job security won't be tied to a particular job so much as it

will be to the ability to work and the ability to find a job. We'll have to redefine that security, but if we do, it will be deeper because it will be real; real meaning tied to the realities of this economy, not the economy of a generation ago. And I know all of you can identify with that, and many of you have worked hard on it.

Finally let me say, in order for any of this to work, there has to be a whole ethic that grips the American imagination. Parents and schools and teachers have to believe that this is important, and have to support it -- all of them. This is not something that professional educators alone can do.

I just -- to give you an example of that, the kind of a flip side of a very troubling story today -- I don't know how many of you saw the cover story in USA Today today, but it's about teen pregnancy and what a terrible problem it is, and how births to teen mothers are going up again and now most of them are out-of-wedlock births. A couple of years ago, the Children's Defense Fund did a study on teen mothers. And they surveyed two groups of them -- one who had a second child out of wedlock, another group that did not have another child out of wedlock. And the single most significant determinant for the ones who never had another child out of wedlock was the acquisition of a good education which gave them an appreciation for what they could become and a devotion for the future and an understanding about what it took to raise children successfully.

So this is something that has to grip the American imagination. Government programs alone can't do it. Educational professionals alone can't do it. There is something for all of us to do. But it begins with us here in Washington passing our agenda.

So, again, I would say, if you believe we should prepare children for school better, if you believe we should set higher standards for our public schools, if you believe we should expand college opportunity and encourage national service and provide a transition from school to work, and create a system of reemployment to replace unemployment, and if you believe we have to challenge every American to be a part of this ethic, then I ask for your support. I ask for your support in the Congress. I ask for your support in your institutions. I ask for your support in the country.

Education has always been important for democracy. Democracy is always a gamble -- at every election, in every crisis, at every turn in the road -- because it requires that a majority of the people have enough information in the proper context with a high enough level of security to make the right decision, sometimes under the most arduous circumstances. We are now being called upon to make a lot of those right decision. And one of those right decisions is the simple question of how we can guarantee the success of this democracy into the 21st century. It begins with the program that I have discussed today.

And I ask for your support, and I thank you for what you're doing to make the American Dream real for so many millions of Americans.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END12:15 P.M. EST